Monday 05 October 2026

Volume 60, Issue 20

www.tridentnewspaper.com

TRIDENT

THE NEWSPAPER OF MARITIME FORCES ATLANTIC SINCE 1966 • LE JOURNAL DES FORCES MARITIMES DE L'ATLANTIQUE DEPUIS 1966

Rockin' at the Dockyard

Entertainment, barbecue, games and prizes were all on offer at His Majesty's Canadian Dockyard on September 17 during the 2026 Halifax Region National Defence Workplace Charitable Campaign (NDWCC) kick-off barbecue. Seen here: live music from Uppercut outside the Base Logistics (BLog) main warehouse. Visit **tridentnewspaper.com/ndwcc/** *to learn more about this year's campaign.*

CPL BRENDAN GAMACHE

HCapt Michael Sangster took part in a Canadian Leaders at Sea event prior to his appointment in the honorary role.

NACC

HCapt Sangster (right) in his new RCN kit alongside LCdr Chris Elliott, Commanding Officer of HMCS Hunter.

NACC

HCapt Sangster embraces new role with HMCS *St. John's*

By Nathan Stone
Trident Staff

Michael Sangster, chief executive officer of the National Association of Career Colleges (NACC), has been appointed Honorary Captain (HCapt) of His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *St. John's*.

The appointment recognizes HCapt Sangster's work highlighting naval careers through the Sea of Opportunities series on his EdUp Canada podcast.

"It's a huge honor to be accepted," said HCapt Sangster.

Rather than a traditional ceremony, his introduction to the role took place in St. John's, N.L., where he joined the ship's company in its namesake city. Sangster said being welcomed aboard by saluting members of the crew made for a more personal introduction to his new role.

The Honorary Captain program appoints distinguished Canadians to serve three-year terms as ambassadors between the Navy and civilian communities.

HCapt Sangster's connection to the Navy began through Lieutenant-Commander (LCdr) Chris Elliott, commanding officer of Naval Reserve Division HMCS *Hunter*, whom he met at an NACC conference. Elliott was attending to promote naval careers and encourage more career college graduates to consider service in the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN).

"He told me, 'I'm here because the Navy needs more graduates from colleges to come into the service,'" said HCapt Sangster.

That introduction led Sangster to participate in the Canadian Leaders at Sea program and later spend several days aboard HMCS *St. John's* during sea training.

The Sea of Opportunities podcast series grew out of that experience. Sangster interviewed crew members aboard the ship as it sailed from Halifax toward the Azores.

The series has produced 19 episodes to date, featuring sailors in roles ranging from acoustics operators to marine engineers and cooks.

What struck Sangster most was the range of responsibilities each sailor holds.

"Nobody had one job on board the ship," he said. "Everybody had multiple jobs they were responsible for, and they knew it, and they were ready, and they were drilled."

He said the partnership between career colleges and the Navy is also expanding. NACC has launched VeteransTraining.ca to help veterans retrain as they transition out of service. Meanwhile, the Navy and career colleges are exploring opportunities for recruits to complete six-month training programs at career colleges before beginning their naval careers.

"It's a pipeline going both ways."

HCapt Sangster, who is based in Ottawa, said he is working with other honorary captains, including HCapt Nick Nanos and HCapt Jim Balsillie, as he settles into the program and his new role.

He recently attended a gathering of honorary naval captains in Quebec City, where senior naval officers sought their advice on recruitment, engagement and communications.

Along with providing advice and promoting the Navy to Canadians, HCapt Sangster is planning more Sea of Opportunities episodes, including interviews with sailors transitioning out of the CAF and back to civilian life.

He said he is proud to continue sharing the stories of the RCN and its members with Canadians.

"It's an incredible honour just to be around the men and women of the Royal Canadian Navy who are serving our country," he said. "They are putting themselves in harm's way on our behalf. For me, it's a huge honor to play a very small role in promoting and supporting them."

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NDWCC season fully underway in Halifax region

By Trident Staff

A set of annual events has officially launched the 2026 Halifax Region National Defence Workplace Charitable Campaign (NDWCC), with members already showing their support.

A kick-off barbecue, held on September 17 outside the Base Logistics (BLog) main warehouse at His Majesty's Canadian Dockyard, brought out a crowd for food, live music, games, prizes, and more. Then, on September 25, local Canadian Armed Forces leaders and other guests gathered at Juno Tower for the annual NDWCC leadership breakfast, a fundraiser that encourages those in leadership positions to support the campaign and promote participation within their units.

Both events welcomed representatives from United Way Halifax and HealthPartners, the main recipients of funds donated through the NDWCC, to speak about the impact those donations have on local charities and the people they support.

Lucy Lanni, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer with United Way Halifax, thanked members of the Defence Team for their continued generosity, noting that last year's Halifax region campaign raised more than $125,000.

"It does not go unnoticed, and we appreciate everything you do at home, and abroad, to support our communities," she said. Lanni also highlighted the campaign's impact beyond financial contributions, pointing to the time and energy Defence Team members put into special events, days of caring and other initiatives that support individuals and families in the community.

Andrea Joinette, Senior Account Manager with HealthPartners, spoke about the collective impact of workplace giving and the wide range of health charities supported through the organization.

"When hundreds or thousands of people get together, those individual contributions become something much bigger," she said.

Joinette noted that health challenges touch nearly everyone in some way, and that with HealthPartners representing a broad range of Canadian health-focused charities, many donors are likely to have a personal connection to one or more of the causes supported through the campaign.

The leadership breakfast also heard from CFB Halifax Base Commander Captain (N) Annick Fortin, who is serving as the NDWCC Champion for this year's Halifax region campaign, as well as Rear-Admiral Pascal Belhumeur, Commander Maritime Forces Atlantic and Joint Task Force Atlantic. Both encouraged Defence Team members help build momentum across local units and organizations.

Cdr Audrey Rivera, Commanding Officer of the BLog Branch at CFB Halifax, gets ready to brave the dunk tank during the 2026 Halifax Region National Defence Workplace Charitable Campaign (NDWCC) Kick-off BBQ on September 17.

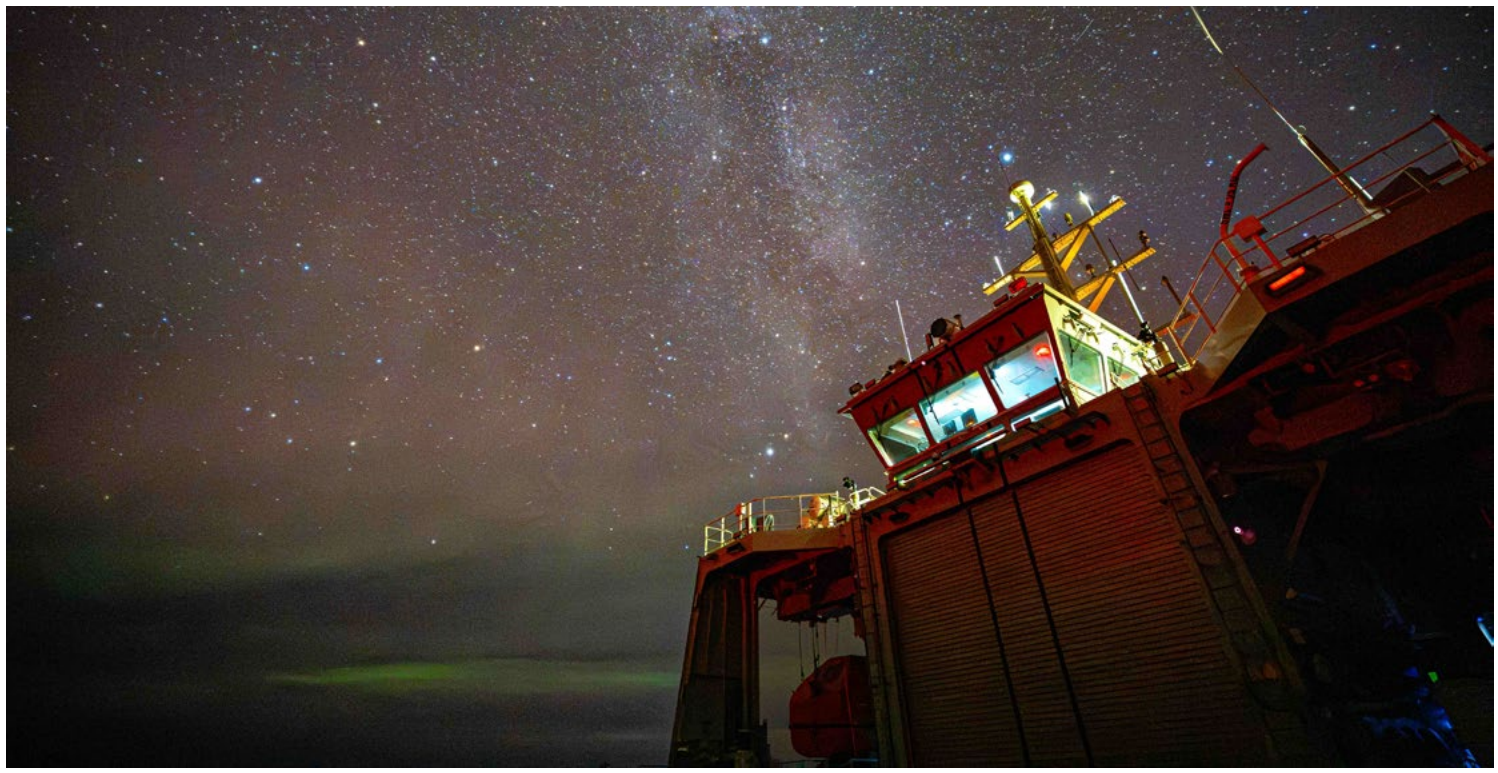
CPL BRENDAN GAMACHE

Visit https://tridentnewspaper.com/ndwcc/ to learn more about donating, getting involved in the campaign, or keeping up with upcoming NDWCC events. Highlights over the coming months include:

- NDWCC Bring Your Dog to Work Day - October 28 and November 24
- NDWCC Escape Room at the Shearwater Aviation Museum - November 4 to December 20
- NDWCC Travel Party - November 25, 7 to 11:30 p.m., $25. Contact Aaron.O'Connor@forces.gc.ca for ticket information.

Exercise ARCTIC GHOST wraps up in Cambridge Bay

By Trident Staff



A starry night is seen from the flight deck of HMCS Robert Hampton Gray during Exercise ARCTIC GHOST in the vicinity of Cambridge Bay, Nunavut on September 17.

CPL MITCHELL PAQUETTE

His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Robert Hampton Gray* successfully completed Exercise ARCTIC GHOST alongside Canadian Coast Guard Ship (CCGS) *Des Groseilliers* and partners from the Canadian Armed Forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Exercise ARCTIC GHOST was a multi-day, Canadian Coast Guard (CCG)-led security operation that aimed to enhance awareness of activity in Canada's Arctic waters through a sustained on-water presence and coordinated surveillance activities with northern partners. The exercise supports the CCG's security-related authorities under the Strengthening Canada's Immigration System and Borders Act and contributes to Canada's ability to monitor, protect and respond to activity in remote Northern locations.

Between September 15 and 19, HMCS *Robert Hampton Gray* and participating partners conducted a series of training scenarios in the vicinity of Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. Activities included joint security patrols, simulated searches for suspicious vessels operating in Canadian waters, and the simulated interception of illegal vessels presenting a security threat to Canada. Exercise ARCTIC GHOST demonstrated the ability of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Coast Guard and other participating organizations to operate together effectively in the challenging Arctic environment, while strengthening whole-of-government coordination, information sharing and operational readiness.

Exercise ARCTIC GHOST also formed part of HMCS *Robert Hampton Gray*'s ongoing coastal transfer from Halifax to its new home port at CFB Esquimalt. The deployment is taking the ship through the Northwest Passage as part of Operation NANOOK-TUUGAALIK, marking the first time an RCN ship has transited the passage while transferring between Canadian home ports.

-With files from the Canadian Coast Guard

Members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police on board a Canadian Coast Guard Zodiac during Exercise ARCTIC GHOST.

CPL MITCHELL PAQUETTE

CCGS Des Groseilliers and HMCS Robert Hampton Gray are seen sailing together on September 16.

CPL MITCHELL PAQUETTE

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(902) 401-0052

CFMWS.CA/HALIFAX /PSPHALIFAX

Royal Canadian Navy flies its first uncrewed helicopter

By RCN

As technology advances, naval air capabilities continue to evolve. From seaplanes and shipborne helicopters to autonomous and remotely piloted systems, seamless surveillance across the sea and air is more achievable and more necessary than ever to protect Canadian sovereignty from emerging threats.

On September 1, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) conducted the inaugural flight of its first uncrewed aircraft system, the CU179 Peregrine, at the Canadian Forces Maritime Experimental and Test Ranges (CFMETR) near Nanaimo, British Columbia.

Operated by the Advanced Naval Capabilities Unit, the successful launch and recovery of the CU179 Peregrine validate years of planning, collaboration, and testing to deliver the RCN's maritime drone capability.

Based on the Schiebel S-100 helicopter drone, an internationally proven platform, the CU179 Peregrine is designed to operate from warships. It will initially be integrated aboard Halifax-class frigates before transitioning to River-class destroyers as they enter service, extending surveillance beyond the ship's horizon.

Equipped with advanced sensors, wide-area surveillance payloads, and long-range radar, the CU179 Peregrine will improve the RCN's maritime situational awareness and support more informed decision-making. Adding uncrewed aircraft to the fleet will strengthen the RCN's ability to secure Canada's waterways and conduct search and rescue missions while reducing risk to personnel.

The flight reflects the collaboration and commitment of sailors, engineers, aviation specialists, and defence scientists across the RCN, defence partners, and Canadian industry. It also advances the operational techniques and airworthiness knowledge needed to conduct uncrewed aviation activities at sea safely and effectively.

With the addition of the CU179 Peregrine, the RCN joins a growing number of Allied navies using uncrewed aviation systems to maintain maritime security and operational effectiveness. The system will also support closer interoperability with Canada's defence partners.

The RCN says it required a team effort across Canadian industry and defence partners to develop the CU179 Peregrine.

RCN

Claims period for CAF Systemic Racism Class Action settlement to end on October 15

By DND

The individual claims process component of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Systemic Racism Class Action settlement is closing soon: the final day to submit a claim is **October 15, 2026**. Current and former CAF members who experienced racial discrimination or racial harassment during their military service between April 17, 1985, and January 10, 2025, may submit a claim for monetary payment.

As outlined in the Federal Court-approved Final Settlement Agreement (FSA), claimants may also apply to receive a personally addressed letter of apology and/or participate in a Restorative Engagement (RE) program. Final dollar amounts of monetary payments may be adjusted based on class size, as set out in the FSA.

Submit a claim

To submit a claim, visit the Canadian Armed Forces Racial Discrimination/Racial Harassment Class Action Claims Administration website.

Systemic Relief Measures updates

The FSA mandates that the institution implement Systemic Relief Measures (SRM) to improve organizational culture and systems with the objective of addressing and eliminating racism, racial discrimination, and racial harassment in the CAF.

Following its inaugural meeting in March 2026, the CAF Systemic Racism Class Action Coordinating Committee met again in May and June to advance implementation of the SRM. Discussions focused on two key components of the FSA: the RE program and the Research and Analysis initiative. Coordinating Committee members provided valuable advice and guidance, so that lived experiences inform both initiatives. Discussions reinforced the importance of meaningful engagement with Class Members through trauma-informed and anti-racist approaches. The Class Members on the committee also emphasized the need for transparent communication, diverse representation, and ongoing collaboration so that implementation of the SRM addresses systemic racism within the CAF and results in sustainable institutional change.

Building on insights gathered through consultations with Class Members and key partners, the Defence Community Support and Resource Centre (DCSRC) finalized the RE program Design Framework. Further consultation and engagement will continue to support program implementation. The DCSRC is actively seeking CAF members to serve as Defence Representatives. Through a structured preparation program, they will deepen their understanding of racial discrimination and harassment as well as strengthen their capacity to listen and acknowledge Class Members' experiences, supporting organizational learning and culture change efforts.

Information sessions about the RE program and participation options will begin in fall 2026. Although the claims period ends on October 15, 2026, eligible Class Members interested in participating in RE may still submit a participation request through the Claims Administrator until engagement activities begin in 2027.

As part of the Research and Analysis SRM, through the Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis, the Defence Team will focus on better understanding the experiences of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized CAF members and the impacts of systemic barriers within the institution. Through a Participatory Action Research approach, this work will help identify and examine systemic racism, racial discrimination, and racial harassment in the CAF. Findings will lead to recommendations that inform institutional policies, programs, and practices and advance FSA objectives.

Have questions?

To learn more, visit the Frequently Asked Questions (PDF) on the Claims Administrator's website. If you have questions, please reach out to Class Counsel, the Court-appointed law firm representing the interests of the entire Class.

Questions related to the RE program may be sent to the following confidential mailbox: SRCARE-RCRSDR@forces.gc.ca or please visit Restorative Engagement on Systemic Racism.

Below the surface: How autonomous systems could protect Canada

By RCN

Canada's vast maritime approaches present a significant surveillance challenge for the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN).

"The scope of what we're working with is enormous if we think about the Canadian coastline and littoral waters," said Commander (Cdr) Greg Atkinson, Section Head for Remote and Autonomous Systems within the RCN.

"It's absolutely massive."

As the Navy explores how autonomous underwater vehicles (UUVs) could support surveillance and other operations, the scale of Canada's waters remains a key consideration.

While UUVs show promise, the challenge goes beyond simply acquiring and deploying autonomous systems. The RCN must determine whether they provide meaningful operational advantages and how they can complement existing capabilities.

"Does it enhance it? Does it make it more resilient when an adversary sends something that is new or disruptive? That's what we need to test it against," said Cdr Phillip Durand, one of the RCN's experts in maritime counter-drone operations.

The Arctic presents some of the toughest challenges for autonomous systems.

From vast distances and limited communications to harsh conditions and under-ice operations, there are still significant obstacles to overcome before the technology can be used effectively in northern waters.

"How is it going to communicate back to the user? How is it going to charge and recharge? How is it going to operate under the ice?" said Cdr Atkinson.

"There are quite a few puzzle pieces to this challenge."

One area where autonomous systems could provide a clear operational benefit is mine countermeasures. Increased use of autonomous technologies could allow dangerous tasks to be conducted without requiring sailors or divers to enter hazardous areas.

"Taking the person out of the minefield is what we're looking to do on the autonomous side," Cdr Atkinson explained.

"The goal is to conduct the full spectrum of mine countermeasure activities, from detection and identification to destruction, from a safe distance from the mine danger area."

The RCN is working with Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC) and other partners. Researchers are conducting trials to test autonomous systems in realistic maritime conditions and exploring how they could support future operations.

"What we are doing today is trying to leverage the work that DRDC has been doing by providing a mature capability that can be easily integrated into operational exercises that also informs requirements," said Cdr Atkinson.

The Navy is paying particular attention to autonomy itself. While uncrewed vehicles already exist, future success may depend on reducing the level of human oversight required to operate them.

"What we're watching is the autonomy of those systems, the ability for them to navigate on their own and complete the mission on their own," Cdr Durand said.

"Because right now, we're one-to-one for an operator to any sort of uncrewed system. We need to expand that."

Greater autonomy could eventually allow a single operator to oversee multiple systems, extending the Navy's reach without requiring a corresponding increase in personnel.

Looking ahead, autonomous systems could play an increasingly important role in maritime surveillance, mine countermeasure operations, and other naval tasks. For the RCN, however, success will not be measured by the technology itself, but by the operational advantage it provides to sailors.

Ultimately, every new capability must answer the same question, Cdr Durand said.

"What does a sailor actually need to do their job as conditions deteriorate, and be able to finish it, complete the mission, and come home safe?"

Members of the Seabed Intervention Systems team operate Remote Environmental Monitoring Unit (REMUS) for Historical Ordnance Disposal operations in the English Channel.

S1 TAYLOR CONGDON

health EXPO 2026

Health Expo 2026:
Strengthening wellness across the Defence community

By PSP Halifax Health Promotion

Health Promotion Services (HP) and Canadian Forces Health Services (CF H Svcs) are once again teaming up to bring you Health Expo 2026: My Health, Our Strength — a day dedicated to building personal well-being and collective readiness across the Defence community. This year's theme highlights a simple truth: when we invest in our own health, we strengthen our families, our teams, and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) as a whole.

Join us on October 27 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Building S120, Drill Hall, Stadacona, for an event designed to inspire, inform, and connect.

What's Happening at Health Expo 2026?

Expect a lively, interactive experience featuring:

- Exhibitors across all domains of health from the CAF, the Department of National Defence (DND), and the civilian community
- Drop-in flu and COVID-19 vaccination clinic: for CAF members only. please bring appropriate ID to receive your vaccination.
- Presentations from subject-matter experts on nutrition, mental health, injury prevention, and lifestyle strategies that support operational readiness and long-term well-being. And don't miss our Taste and Learn session at noon and sample a delicious recipe while picking up culinary and nutrition tips from a chef-dietitian duo.

Whether you're looking to learn, connect, or simply explore, the Expo offers something for everyone.

Connecting the Defence Community to Local Resources

Health Expo brings together the many agencies, clubs, and organizations that support physical, mental, and social well-being. Explore:

- Community groups and not-for-profits sharing local health-promoting programs
- Veteran organizations, Defence Advisory Groups (DAGs), and military clubs
- PSP departments highlighting fitness, recreation, and wellness initiatives
- Static displays and hands-on activities offering practical tools for everyday health

CPL GREGORY COLE

Health Promotion Services and CF H Svcs are once again hosting a base Health Expo inside the S120 Drill Hall on October 27.

On-Site Immunization Clinics

In support of seasonal health protection, a flu and COVID-19 immunization clinic will be available for CAF members.

These clinics offer a convenient opportunity to stay up to date on vaccinations without leaving the base.

Open to All Defence Community Members

Health Expo is open to CAF members, civilian Defence Team personnel, Veterans, and family members, provided they have the appropriate identification for base access. The event is designed to be inclusive, welcoming, and family-friendly, with opportunities for all attendees to learn, connect, and participate.

Engagement, Door Prizes, and More

Expect a fun, interactive atmosphere with door prizes, draws, and engagement activities throughout the day.

Grand Prize — Valued at $700!

- $50 Murphy Hospitality Group Gift Card
- One-night stay at Mysa Nordic Spa & Resort
- Two Mysa Thermal Experience Passes

Health Expo 2026 reflects the ongoing commitment of HP and CF H Svcs to support the health and readiness of the Defence community. By bringing together trusted organizations, knowledgeable professionals, and practical tools, the Expo empowers members to take meaningful steps toward improving their well-being, both on and off duty.

Mark your calendars, spread the word, and join us at the Drill Hall on October 27 for a day dedicated to strengthening the health of our Defence community.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

While deployed in the North Atlantic as part of Operation REASSURANCE, the ship's company of HMCS Ville de Québec raised the Survivors' Flag aboard the ship to mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30.

Back on land, members of Formation Halifax attended a number of special events and raised flags across CFB Halifax and 12 Wing Shearwater. These commemorations recognize the impacts of the residential school system, honouring Survivors, their families and communities, and those who never returned home.

CPL GREGORY COLE

SPORTS & FITNESS

FDU(A) members, friends and colleagues together following the 2026 PO2 Craig Blake Memorial Fitness Challenge.

MONA GHIZ

Wet weather made for a messy cycling leg of the event at MacDonald Beach.

MONA GHIZ

Spectators look on at participants in the water during the 300-metre swim that kicks off the race.

AVR SUMIN KIM

Cmdre Jacob French, far left, made the unit trophy presentation to the team from FDU(A).

S1 BRENDAN MCLOUGHLIN

Fitness and remembrance at the PO2 Craig Blake Memorial Fitness Challenge

By Trident Staff

Canadian Armed Forces members and Defence Team personnel gathered at MacDonald Beach in Shearwater on September 18 for the 2026 edition of the Petty Officer 2nd Class (PO2) Craig Blake Memorial Fitness Challenge, combining friendly competition with remembrance of a fallen Fleet Diving Unit (Atlantic) (FDU(A)) sailor.

The annual sprint triathlon challenges participants with a 300-metre open-water swim, a 6.5-kilometre bike ride and a two-kilometre run. Competitors can take on all three legs individually or divide the course among teams of two or three.

Before the racing began, FDU(A) Coxswain Chief Petty Officer 1st Class Steven Giffin spoke to participants about the late PO2 Douglas "Craig" Blake and his legacy, followed by a moment of silence.

PO2 Blake, an FDU(A) Clearance Diver and avid cyclist and triathlete, was killed while serving in Afghanistan on May 3, 2010. His former colleagues created the memorial fitness challenge following his death, building an event that reflects his passion for physical fitness while bringing the Defence community together each year.

Among those taking on the full individual challenge in 2026 was Commodore Jacob French, Commander of Canadian Fleet Atlantic, who completed each of the swim, cycling and running portions of the course.

This year's individual category winners were Noah Bouffard in the Open Male category, Carolane Pitre in Open Female, Kharim Schliewinsky in Master Male and Katarzyna Danigier in Master Female.

In the open team competition, "Cold Water" took the category win, with Dom Drozdowski on the swim, Garett Dobson on the bike and Robert MacMillan on the run.

FDU(A) claimed the unit category and the event's cup trophy as the fastest unit team. Wyatt Carling completed the swim, Bradley Northrup handled the cycling leg and Danny Morin finished the course on the run.

While the top performances are always recognized, the annual event continues to place its emphasis on participation, camaraderie and remembrance of the sailor whose name it carries.

Women's powerlifting seminars introduce CAF members to the sport

By Trident Staff

Aspiring military powerlifters had a special learning opportunity at the Fleet Fitness and Sports Centre throughout September, where PSP Halifax hosted two seminars led by Amy Muench, a strength and nutrition coach and Head of Trainer Development at Evolve Fitness in Halifax.

The sessions were aimed at Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members with some strength-training experience who wanted to learn more about competitive powerlifting. The first seminar covered competition rules, permitted equipment, judging standards and the commands used during the squat, bench press and deadlift.

The second focused on training and nutrition while giving participants a chance to put those lessons into practice. Muench said the two-part format allowed the group to work on technique with lighter weights before testing themselves with heavier lifts.

"We also had some big lifts happening in the gym, which was incredible to see," she said.

The seminars were also intended to encourage more women to become involved in the CAF powerlifting community. Military lifters have opportunities to compete through CAF regional competitions and advance to the national level, and organizers, including Muench and PSP Fitness and Sports Instructor Heidi Thibodeau, hoped the sessions would help make that path more approachable for newcomers.

Muench said she approached the seminars by thinking about the information that would have helped her feel more comfortable when first entering the sport.

"I always look back to then and I think, 'What would I have wanted to know ahead of time going into it? What would have made me feel more prepared?' So that was kind of where I was trying to lead things."

The sessions were held as part of the Fleet Powerlifting Collective initiative; members normally meet Mondays (2:30 – 3:30 p.m.) and Wednesdays (11 a.m. - noon) at the Fleet Fitness and Sports Centre. Fill out this form to receive more information.

A series of seminars at the Fleet Fitness and Sports Centre provided CAF members with an introduction to women's powerlifting.

RYAN MELANSON

The CFB Halifax Mariners men's and women's hockey teams are both looking for gold at the upcoming CAF Regional Hockey Championships.

CPL ALEX ARSENAULT

The Mariners women's team on the ice against Gagetown during last year's regional tournament.

AURORA NEWSPAPER

Mariners hockey teams prepare to hit the ice

By Nathan Stone,
Trident Staff

The Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Halifax Mariners are lacing up for the 2026/2027 season, with both the men's and women's hockey teams looking to build on past successes and overcome familiar challenges.

Sailor 1st Class (S1) Kendra Martin, a player representative for the women's team, says the Mariners are coming off a strong campaign last year in the Nova Scotia Women's Hockey League Intermediate A Division.

"Overall the season was good; we won a game in the playoffs, which in my experience I don't think we ever have," said S1 Martin, who has played with the team for five years.

The Mariners lost in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Atlantic Region Championship final last season, but are ready for another shot. The 2027 tournament will also offer the winning team a chance to advance to CAF Nationals, whereas no women's national tournament was held last season.

"We at least know that we have a chance to go to nationals and that's great," she said. "It gives us more incentive to play hard at regionals."

The women's team will play once a week on Saturdays, with two practices during the week, beginning in mid-October. S1 Martin added that the team is always looking for new players to fill spots as teammates cycle out for postings or deployments.

While the Mariners are the competitive women's squad, a second base team, the Kraken, offers a recreational alternative, and Martin says there is a good working relationship between the two. Kraken players also occasionally fill in on the Mariners roster when the need arises.

On the men's side, the program faces a similar set of hurdles. Petty Officer 2nd Class (PO2) Robert Sanford and Petty Officer 1st Class (PO1) Curtis Chambers, who run the men's and age 35-and-up senior men's teams, say the biggest challenge is maintaining a consistent roster.

"The first half of the season, usually up until Christmas, is very difficult for us," said PO1 Chambers, noting that deployments and fleet schedules, much like with the women's team, make it difficult to assemble consistent rosters.

PO2 Sanford added that the competitive level of the Mariners is often misunderstood.

"This isn't recreational hockey," he said. "This is a national and regional competition."

The men's teams have also struggled to find a suitable civilian league, often finding themselves either overmatched or not challenged enough.

Despite the obstacles, both team organizers are focused on rebuilding the program's standard.

"We're trying to get back to where the Mariners used to be," said PO2 Sanford, pointing to a previous period of regional dominance that has not continued in recent years.

Team selection is targeted for mid-November, with practices set to take place at the Halifax Forum and Shearwater Arena. Both programs are actively seeking new players, with the men's team specifically in need of goaltenders.

"We're looking to create a good program for everybody to have fun and be successful," said PO1 Chambers.

Interested in playing? Reach out to:

- Curtis.Chambers@forces.gc.ca
  Men's team
- Robert.Sanford@forces.gc.ca
  Senior men's team
- Kendra.Martin@forces.gc.ca
  Women's team